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PROBLEMS ARISING AND METHODS USED IN INTERVIEWING AND SELECTING EMPLOYEES

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In a highly developed manufacturing plant where each section of each division is a complicated machine, there offers a possibility for almost every kind of labor. Each section is in itself an organization of which each employe is a vital factor. How to find the right man for any of the several thousand vacancies when such an opening occurs is the problem of the employment manager. Although he cannot be expected to know the intricacies of these several thousand jobs, he must understand the dovetailing and the interdependence of each department on the other.

A particular analysis of every department in chart form with its individual positions listed regarding duties, compensation and possibilities, should be in the hands of every employment manager. It should comprise such points as:

- (a) Nature of the work.
- (b) Specific importance.
- (c) Working conditions (involving physical or nervous strain).
- (d) Range of wages.
- (e) Hours.
- (f) Permanency.
- (g) Age limits.
- (h) Sources of supply.
- (i) Educational and personal requirements.
- (j) Necessary experience.
- (k) Opportunity for promotion.

Though an arduous task, the compiling of such a chart by the employment manager personally will be of utmost value to him.

Every position is in reality a potential vacancy to the employment manager who should know its demands so well that in his later task of interviewing applicants, he can readily decide in which particular groove his prospect belongs.

The manager must know more, however. Not only the job

itself but the individual tastes, prejudices or idiosyncracies of each department manager must be thoroughly understood. However ridiculous it may seem, it behooves the employment department to cater to these whims. If a manager is known to consider tall, slender, dignified women more efficient than small, brisk, energetic ones; other things being equal, give him what he wants and reserve the energetic, nervous type for his fellow manager who in his turn, may interpret poise and calm as indications of stupidity and sloth.

The Prospect File

It should be the aim of the manager to have at all times upon his list, the names of applicants for practically any vacancy that may arise. This is not possible in times of general industrial activity when the labor market is small, as the most desirable material is idle but a short time. Each locality will have its particular problems. In Pennsylvania, at the present time, owing to the Child Labor Law, effective January 1, 1916, which provides that minors under sixteen attend school eight hours a week, the sixteen-year-old boy is in great demand. This is due to the fact that employers who need only one boy, cannot always conveniently arrange for the boy's periodical absence and hence will only employ boys over sixteen, with the result that an efficient boy of sixteen is rarely out of work. For this reason to keep on hand a file of intelligent sixteen-year-old boys has been found to be impossible. On the other hand, on account of the small demand, a list of desirable errand boys under sixteen can be well maintained and a new employe procured from this list immediately.

SOURCES OF SUPPLY

Present Employes

Employes of the company should be encouraged to consult with the employment department for the purpose of stating their inclinations, ambitions and desires for promotion. A careful list of these employes should be kept together with an analysis of their capabilities and aspirations. In case of vacancies, these employes should be given an opportunity for promotion.

Department managers should be obliged to send the names of employes who are about to be discontinued on account of decrease in work, to the employment office at least forty-eight hours in advance of the date fixed for their departure so that they may be

transferred to vacancies in other departments; or failing such, be considered for re-employment at a future date.

In filling every vacancy, it is obvious that present and former employees should be given preference. Not only is the employe, trained in the policy of the company, better fitted for more important work than the new employe, but by systematically endeavoring to promote the efficient workers, the loyalty of the force is increased and the greatest cause of discontent removed.

Daily Applicants

The next source of supply should be derived from carefully kept classified records of those applying at the employment office. Hours for interviewing should be set aside daily and should include the hour from twelve to one since many of the best prospective employes who are employed elsewhere, seek new opportunities during their luncheon period.

Schools, Colleges and Technical Schools

Schools should be visited and graduates encouraged to register with the employment office. Moreover, personal contact with the principals and heads of the employment departments of each school should be one of the duties of the employment manager. The schools are ready to coöperate. The public trades and commercial schools in particular are making a sincere effort to meet the needs of the employer; and they are entitled to his encouragement.

For the most part, the candidates supplied are desirable. One tendency alone on the part of school authorities is difficult to combat. The pupil's value is too often judged on the academic standing alone without regard to the personality of the individual. This is but natural since the academic scale has been for so long the only basis of measurement within the school. Business colleges, type-writer companies and manufacturers of office devices are frequently valuable sources of skilled office labor.

Societies, heads of the Y. M. C. A.'s, and the Y. W. C. A.'s, state employment bureaus and social service committees, frequently suggest the names of worthy candidates. Assistance from these sources is not without its drawbacks, however, as the employment manager must occasionally expend much time in interviewing protégés obviously unfit but sent by social workers who have

become so interested in their "cases" as to be very naturally blinded to their limitations.

Written Applications

Letters of application are daily received at the employment office. Those who by past experience and present inclination appear to be desirable candidates should be given an opportunity to call for a personal interview. In this way a constant stream of potential material is being received.

Advertisement

From time to time blind advertisements should be inserted in the daily newspapers to replenish any type of labor that appears to be scarce. A few of the most promising replies are selected and the writers sent for immediately. Others should be sent a general letter to call at their convenience.

Last and in times of great stress, resort must be had to the open advertisement, whose only redeeming feature is quick action. These are the most important sources of supply.

REQUISITES OF THE EMPLOYMENT OFFICE

Location

The employment office should be located on the ground floor and equipped with both a house entrance and a street exit. It should comprise a large waiting room, a detail office and a separate office for personal interviews.

Service

The clerks and assistants in the employment office should be not only possessed of poise, presence of mind, cheerfulness of disposition, discretion and abundance of tact, but they should be imbued with a sense of loyalty to the company as a whole and a realization of the fact that their department is primarily one of service.

As in the case of employes in any service department, the nerve strain on the personnel of the employment department is frequently excessive, owing to the fact that all demands, even if unreasonable, must be met with the greatest cheerfulness. It is important, therefore, that the personal relation between the employment manager

and his staff should be pleasant and informal and that his assistants should be encouraged to bring their problems to him at all times. This not only acts as an outlet for the employe, but has the added effect of bringing to the employment manager's attention, many conditions in his own and other departments that need readjusting.

With convenient quarters and intelligent and sympathetic assistance, the daily interviews of applicants can be handled efficiently and in order.

Personal Qualifications

What characteristics do we require in these prospective employees? Each position has, of course, its particular demands, hence general rules that will apply to individual cases of selection are difficult. From the job of laborer, where much brawn and some brain is needed, to the position requiring all brain and no brawn, the variations of qualifications are legion.

Applicants divide themselves into three main groups: those employed elsewhere who seek a better opportunity; the unemployed, and those classified as unemployable. These patently undesirables must be eliminated from the desirable and possible applicants.

Each applicant should fill in an application blank containing information regarding his age, education and previous experience. This application, presented to the manager previous to his personal interview with the applicant, gives him an opportunity to estimate the qualifications that the candidate should be expected to possess in view of his past experience.

In the case of clerical or office help, handwriting and the accuracy with which questions on the application blank are answered, serve as a preliminary guide to the mental qualifications of the candidate, though this theory is most unsound in the case of applicants for unskilled labor. Each applicant desirable or possible, should be granted a private interview with the manager.

Appearance

Personal appearance is the first impression the manager obtains. Appearance should not be interpreted to mean general effect or dress, which should be considered in their proper places. It is the face of the applicant and most particularly the expression of his

eyes and mouth which are of utmost importance in the estimate of the employer.

I lay emphasis on this point as much of the unnecessary "hiring and firing" of help may be attributed to the fact that the prospective employer, misled by the general pleasing appearance of his young applicant, and mistaking personal vanity and fashion's conventionality for an indication of neatness and efficiency, frequently hires hastily only to discover subsequently that he is burdened with an ornament instead of an implement.

Cordial Reception

Even where the manager has fifty or more interviews a day, he should obviously expend as intense interest on each of his numerous applicants as he would naturally show to an occasional visitor. To greet the candidate by rising and shaking hands not only relieves the formality of the situation and dispels much of the applicant's self-consciousness, but also gives the manager an indication of personality through the firmness or flabbiness of the grasp. Since, however, custom, education and social training are all factors entering into the heartiness and spontaneity of the hand-shake, it should be regarded not as indelible evidence but merely as a possible indication.

Expression

The manager should, on greeting the candidate, look at him attentively and earnestly and during the first part of the interview, study his face carefully. This not only gives him an opportunity to discover whether his candidate's expression betrays intelligence, earnestness and candor, but adds much to putting the candidate at his ease and inspiring him with the confidence which he needs in order to display his qualifications to the best advantage.

Character Analysis

Some employers justly claim to be able to determine the characteristics of an individual by analyzing all physical conditions such as the height of his brow, the curve of his nose and the shape of his head. Though not an adherent to this method I am not unappreciative of the fact that productive scientific study has been conducted along these lines and that on this basis, careful and

efficient selections have been made. Even if this method is followed, the employment manager must have in addition an understanding of the more usual human characteristics and tendencies. He should be able to interpret in his applicant with some degree of accuracy, such qualities as: the firmness of his eye, the set of his jaw, the self-assurance of his manner, the degree of culture of his speech, as well as noticeable mannerisms.

He should ask such questions as serve to draw out the applicant since his point of view is generally more important than the actual information. Occasionally the reverse is true and the candidate becomes verbose, requiring not "drawing out" but "pinning down." Under these circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to make him account fully for his employable time.

Purpose and Team Sense

What is his purpose in applying? Has he any serious reason? Has he heard "it is a nice place to work?" Has he a friend working here? Is he seriously seeking work or did he just "happen in?" His attitude toward the economic scheme in life in general, however crudely stated, furnishes more of a guide towards purpose than any assertion he may make of his desire to obtain new work and his attitude toward previous employment is of utmost significance. Where he worked, under what conditions, what hours he observed and how monotonous or diversified his task, are questions that will not only elicit specific information but will reveal in nearly every case whether the applicant in his previous employment had the all-important qualities of loyalty and "team sense." An applicant instinctively possessed of "team sense" comprising willingness, cheerfulness and confidence, is a risk so safe as to be a golden investment to any employer. The ground work is there ready for unlimited development. The loyalty will follow if he is suitably placed and if he receives from his employer the coöperation to which he is entitled.

Home Conditions

Questions regarding the individual's home, responsibility, the number in the family and the number of wage-earners will bring out pertinent information. It is at this point, with an understanding of the home, financial, and housing conditions of the applicant

that his clothes and general appearance begin to bear a real significance. His tastes and aspirations should be ascertained and he should be encouraged to enlarge upon the kind of work he would prefer to be engaged in.

Health

The physical status of the applicant so far as weight, healthy condition of the skin and alertness of movement are concerned should be taken into consideration in the general estimate; the actual physical condition of each prospective employe should, however, be scientifically determined by a medical examiner.

These are some of the general characteristics desirable in all employes: intelligence, serious attitude towards work, willingness, earnestness, "team sense," loyalty and good health. At this point comes into play the manager's knowledge of the various jobs and the specific assignment of the applicant.

Assignment

His prospective employe, John Jones, he recognizes as desirable so far as personal qualifications and characteristics are concerned but into which of the various holes this particular peg shall be thrust, depends largely upon the candidate's previous education and experience. From the company's point of view, he must become a permanent employe. This can only be accomplished by placing him either in the work he feels he wants and for which he is fitted, or failing that in a position that will develop along the desired lines. From the employe's point of view, he must be aided, encouraged and stimulated to develop steadily. This is not the only problem to be solved regarding John, however. The other all-important element of his prospective manager enters in. Granted two or more jobs of more or less similar nature, for which manager is John best fitted temperamentally? Mr. A. would not take him because he is too young, while Mr. B. would not desire him because he has had too much experience. Mr. C. would reject him because he is employed at the present time, but there is Mr. D. or Mr. E. whom he will suit in every respect. If neither Mr. D. nor Mr. E. has an opening, John Jones' application will be assigned to a folder together with a full description of him, there to remain until there is a demand for his services. As a guide in making a written analysis

of the candidate, multigraphed cards bearing the following headings are found to be useful:—

Qualifications	Type of Mind	Mentality	Remarks
Personality	Executive		
Build	Detail		
Weight	Promotive		
Appearance	Accounting		
Expression	Clerical		
English	Selling		
Initiative	Mechanical		

This preliminary "sizing up" and classification of an applicant cannot be done too carefully. On the accuracy with which the analysis is made, depends the dispatch with which subsequent positions are filled.

Unexpected Demands for Labor

In times of sudden pressure of new work, when the supply of available names on file will not meet the demand, recourse must be made to open advertisement, from the applicants to which a more hasty selection is of necessity made. There is only one redeeming feature to open advertisement and that is the rapidity with which temporary workers may be secured.

Filling Requisitions for Help

Where the function of the employment office is not to employ but to recommend candidates for positions, applicants fitted for the position in accordance with the company's standard, who in addition, suit the personal requirements of the manager should alone be recommended.

When vacancies occur, the classified files must be consulted and the most suitable applicants summoned. In cases of skilled office workers such as stenographers, typists, estimators, addressers, comptometer and multigraph operators, tests should be given for speed and accuracy and the standardization division (if there is one) should furnish the requirements for these tests. Recommendations or references from outside sources do not prove infallible, but should in all cases be investigated.

Knowledge of the Labor Market

The number of applicants sent for must exceed the number of positions vacant in proportion to the supply of the labor market. To use the case of the young boy in Pennsylvania, should a request be received for two sixteen-year-old boys, seven or eight of the most desirable applicants on the file would not be too many to send for as the chances are that 50 per cent will be satisfactorily employed. If the request on the other hand, be for two boys under sixteen, on account of the present lack of demand, three boys would be enough to summon.

Outlining the Position

Before any applicant for a prospective position is recommended, he must be told what the general nature of his work will be and given exact information regarding working hours, salary and the possibility of advancement. He should be encouraged to ask questions about the work and should not be recommended if he shows the slightest hesitancy in complying with the conditions.

With every applicant recommended for a position, there should be sent a card which demands either the acceptance of the applicant or a complete explanation as to why he is not satisfactory. The following form has been found expedient:

Mr. Jones (Manager of Business Office)

Harry Smith has been interviewed and is recommended to you for the position of *Errand Boy*

After you have interviewed this applicant, please ask him to return at once to this office.

When applicant is accepted by you, an immediate medical examination will be arranged. Please state here when you wish applicant to report for work

If case of rejection, you will greatly assist this Division in intelligently referring applicants to you by explaining below in what way he has not satisfied your requirements.

After the applicant is engaged by his new manager, he is examined by the company's physician. The physician on passing the prospective employe, sends him with his certificate to the employment manager, who after giving him an introductory note to his foreman, should embrace the opportunity to congratulate him on having obtained the position and explain to him that the function of the employment department is not merely to employ but to assist all employes to maintain satisfactory employment and to that end, it is always ready to consult with employes at any time. A cordial invitation to report on his progress should be extended.

Reports

All cards of recommendation should be filed according to departments and monthly reports made of the number of candidates accepted and rejected. The reasons for rejections not only serve as a guide to the employment manager for future recommendations, but also give him definite data on which to work when the rejections from any one department become either frequent or whimsical.

Finally, careful reports by departments must be maintained to show by month the number of employes engaged and discontinued. To a very great extent the labor turnover may be said to measure the efficiency of the employment department.

The labor turnover must be no idle speculation. It must be accurate and so devised as to show by running figures its improvement or retrogression.

Functions of the Employment Manager

To sustain a service department for the executives, an advisory bureau for the employes, to fill vacancies with the minimum loss of time and with the maximum satisfaction to executives, and to secure for those vacancies only those who will become permanent employes; to transfer those employes not needed in one department to fill vacancies where pressure is great, to help to maintain a contented, permanent working force, these are some of the problems of the employment manager.